

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service
Eastern Region



USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region **The Year in Review 2009**

Courageous Conservation A sustainable future, a legacy of restoration



Regional Forester's Message

The Eastern Region had a very busy year in 2009 embarking on ambitious initiatives to benefit the lands we manage and the public we serve. The results are clear, land management accomplishments were up over last year, recreation opportunities have never been better, and on-going restoration work is improving plant and wildlife habitat.

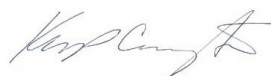
Economic stresses severely affected the 20 states in our Region. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), signed by President Obama in February, resulted in \$92 million targeted for on-the-ground projects in Eastern Region communities with high unemployment. In 2009, our 14 national forests and one national tallgrass prairie began work with local contractors to implement 60 projects that put people back to work and improve our public lands.

With our new and innovative landscape-scale approach to climate change, we've stepped up our collaboration with scientists from across the government, as well as from universities and non-government agencies.

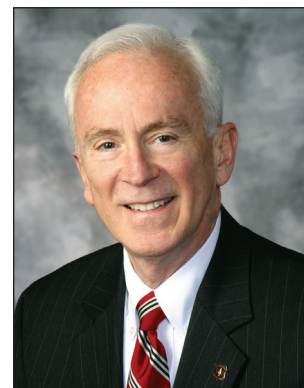
We celebrated notable anniversaries in the East with the Superior (100 years), Huron (100 years), and Hiawatha (100 years) National Forests. We also commemorated the 45th anniversary of Job Corps and celebrated Smokey Bear's 65th birthday.

Our dedicated employees are building partnerships with communities, businesses, and sister agencies on a myriad of common objectives to have long-lasting impacts. To our numerous partners and volunteers, my hat goes off to you for your dedication to our shared commitment of responsible land management.

I encourage you to get out on a forest or the prairie and enjoy these lands that we all value. Whether it's hiking, bird watching, camping, or snowmobiling, the Eastern Region offers some of the most spectacular backdrops for your outdoor experience. We look forward to seeing you!



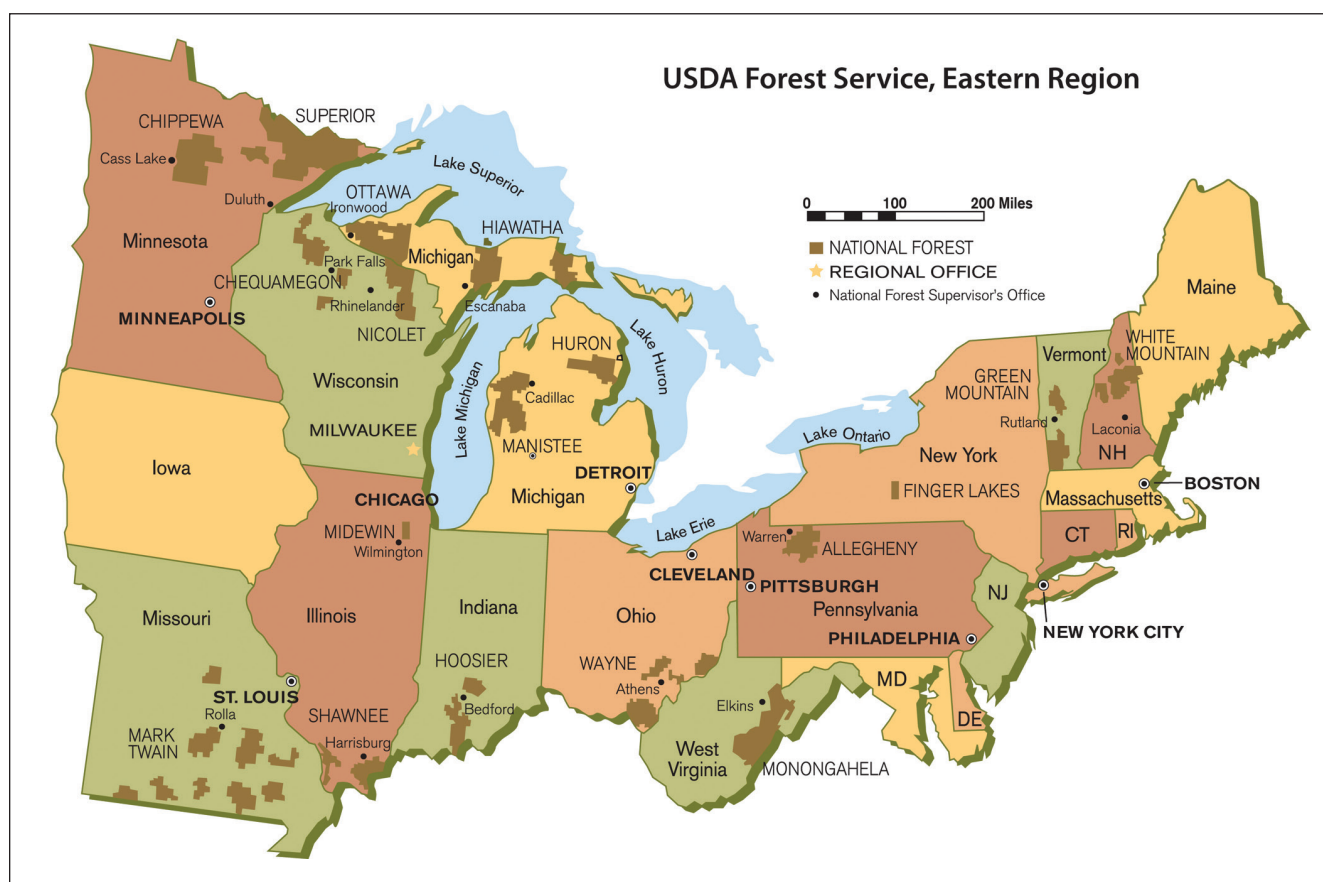
Kent P. Connaughton



Kent P. Connaughton
Regional Forester

USDA Forest Service Eastern Region

626 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414.297.3600
www.fs.fed.us/r9/



Protect Ecosystems Across Boundaries



Combating Invasive Species

The exotic Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) continues to be a major threat affecting forests in the East. We made significant progress addressing this threat in 2009 through:

- Developing an ash management strategy and ash seed collection guidelines. The Chippewa National Forest has begun collecting seed;
- Working with states on firewood closures to slow the spread of EAB; and
- Preparing National Environmental Policy Act documents for a more effective and efficient response if EAB is found in the Region's forests.

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a disease linked to the death of nearly one million cave bats in the Northeastern U.S. Affected bats typically have a white fungus on their extremities that is visible after they enter caves and mines to hibernate for winter. A loss of critical body fat is thought to be a key factor in their deaths. WNS was discovered on the Monongahela (W.Va.) and Green Mountain (Vt.) National Forests in 2009. Through collaborative efforts, the Region is addressing this threat through:

- Issuing a temporary emergency cave and mine closure order for all Eastern Region national forests to slow the spread;
- Completing a large-scale survey to assess summer bat populations before WNS spreads farther west and south; and
- Producing a web documentary, *The Battle for Bats: White-Nose Syndrome*, through a partnership among the Monongahela National Forest (W. Va.), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ravenswood Media. To watch the film on-line, visit: http://www.caves.org/WNS/battle_for_bats.htm

By joining with partners, other agencies, and private landowners, we are collaborating on a shared vision of protecting the 12 million acres of public lands in the East—now and into the future. Highlights of our achievements include:

- Meeting targets in restoring habitat for wildlife, fish, and rare plants; reducing hazardous fuels; and improving vegetation management;
- Planting 200 disease-resistant elm seedlings in the Chippewa National Forest (Minn.)—a joint effort with partners, including the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe;
- Ottawa National Forest (Mich.) receiving the 2009 Wings Across the America's Butterfly Conservation Award for its butterfly inventory and habitat recovery; and
- Providing nesting habitat for the peregrine falcon in the Superior National Forest's (Minn.) Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness after four decades of absence, thanks to the cooperative management efforts of many partners.

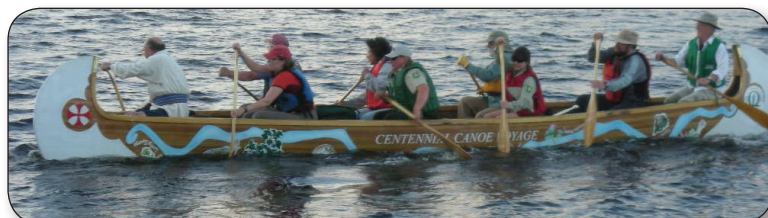


PROTECTING A "GREAT" RESOURCE

The lands and waters of the Great Lakes are unique world-class resources. They contain 20 percent of the world's fresh water and are majestic, natural settings for visitors. Over the years, unsustainable use of this great resource resulted in loss of flora, fauna, soil, and diminished air and water quality, to the point where the entire Great Lakes ecosystem is showing signs of severe stress. The 2010 Environmental Protection Agency's budget includes \$475 million for the President's Initiative to address significant Great Lakes basin problems, such as invasive aquatic species, non-point source pollution, and contaminated sediment. The Eastern Region, in partnership with Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry and Northern Research Station, proposed projects to address all major focus areas. If funded by this program, work will take place on the six Forest Service units within the basin: the Superior (Minn.), Chequamegon-Nicolet (Wisc.), Ottawa, Hiawatha, Huron-Manistee (Mich.), and Finger Lakes (N.Y.) National Forests.

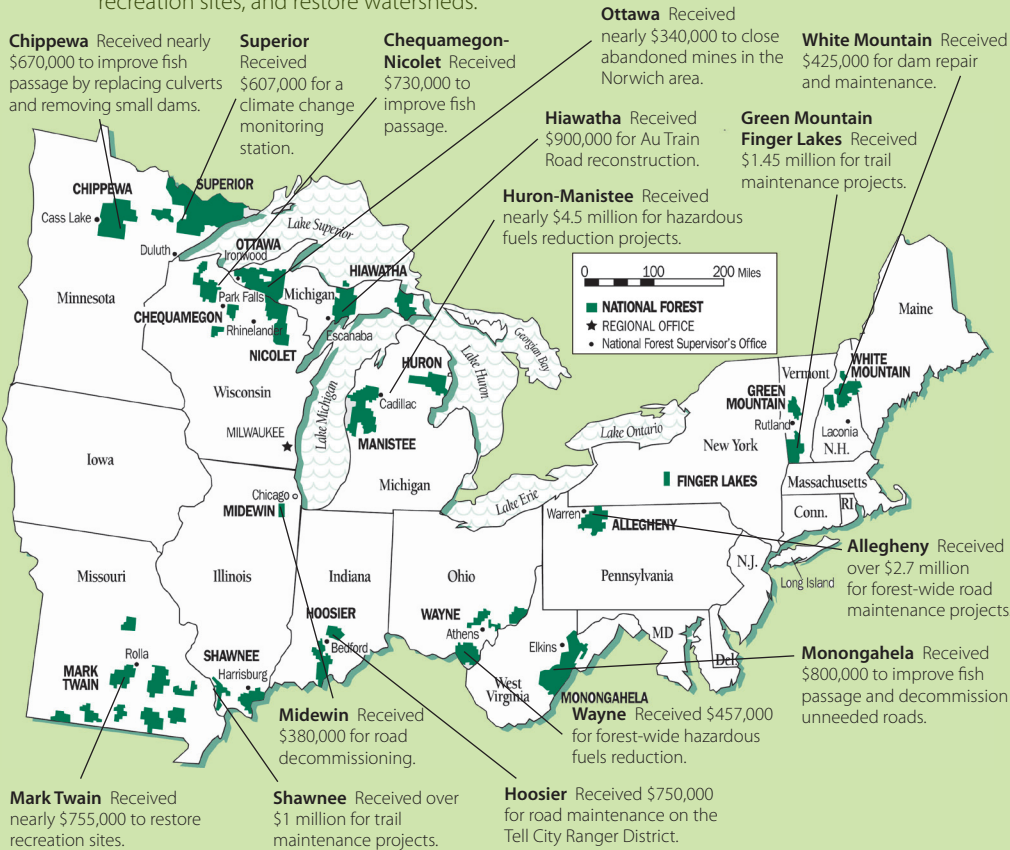
Across International Lines to the Heart of the Continent

Canoe the Heart of the Continent – Centennial Canoe Voyage was a commemorative trip sponsored by the Heart of the Continent Partnership (HOCPP) in July 2009. The partnership reaches across Canada's border and promotes public lands of the Superior National Forest and Canada's Quetico Provincial Park. The "voyage" was a perfect opportunity to experience the waterways and set the stage for future cooperative efforts on issues such as preventing the spread of invasive species and maintaining economic vitality of local communities.



PUTTING PEOPLE BACK TO WORK & RESTORING OUR FORESTS

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) made it possible for the Forest Service to contribute to the economic recovery of our country while allowing us to complete much needed resource and facility improvement projects. We received \$92 million in ARRA funding to reduce hazardous fuels, improve road safety, close abandoned mines, improve & maintain recreation sites, and restore watersheds.



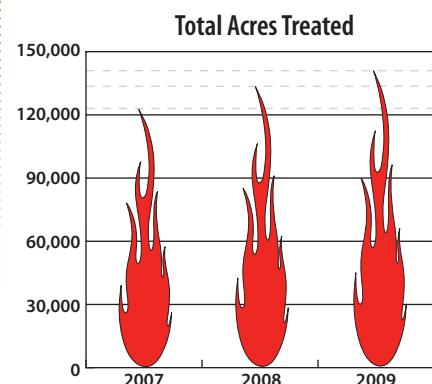
Monongahela Goes Wild!

In 2009, wilderness acreage in the Monongahela National Forest (W.Va.) grew from 78,131 acres to more than 115,000 acres with the passage of the "Wild Monongahela Wilderness" bill. The Cranberry, Otter Creek, and Dolly Sods wildernesses were expanded and three new wildernesses (Big Draft, Roaring Plains West, and Spice Run) were created. The Wild Monongahela Act was introduced and supported by the entire West Virginia congressional delegation and represented countless hours of discussion and compromise by both supporters and opponents.



Using Fire as a Resource Management Tool

In 2009, the Eastern Region made significant progress in reducing accumulated hazardous fuels. Fuels reduction near communities bordering forested land is essential to limiting the risk of wildfires. Fuel treatments are designed to have multiple benefits, including improving wildlife habitat, reducing non-native invasive species, and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.



Land Acquisitions Reap Multiple Benefits

The Eastern Region acquired key land parcels this year that will provide additional public recreation opportunities, preserve wildlife and fish habitat, and protect wetlands and other land from development. Of particular significance was the 32-acre Chain Saw Sisters tract on the Superior National Forest (Minn.). This tract directly adjoins the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and includes the popular Mudro Creek entry point, as well as approximately 900 feet of shoreline on Picket Lake and 600 feet of frontage on Mudro Creek.

Specific accomplishments include:

Acre Acquired	3,267.36
Purchase Dollars Spent	\$6,564,350
Number of Land Purchases	28

American Beech Makes a Comeback

Working with researchers from all over the Northeast, Allegheny National Forest (Pa.) silviculturists are exploring ways to improve the resistance of American beech trees to beech scale, a fatal non-native pest. This insect attacks beech trees by creating cracks in the bark that enable fungi to enter and kill the tree. By grafting genetically resistant beech trees with scale resistant sprouts, a more resistant tree is established. Seed from grafted trees will be used to establish healthy stands in other parts of the Allegheny National Forest.



Connect Citizens to the Land



Whether you live next door to a national forest or are planning your next great adventure, people often seek a direct connection to nature. While some come to recreate and unwind, others make their living in the woods. In 2009, we connected citizens to the land by:

- Getting more kids in the woods through national grants—the Hiawatha National Forest (Mich.) was one of 17 forests nationwide to successfully compete for the prestigious More Kids in the Woods grants;
- Hosting field trips for congressional staff, enhancing their knowledge about national forests/prairie and the issues land managers face; and
- Hosting middle school children from the Lac du Flambeau Tribe in Wisconsin at a conservation education themed camp at the Ottawa National Forest's Camp Nesbit in Michigan.

URBAN CONNECTIONS

The Eastern Region's Urban Connections (UC) program continued to connect people to their national forests in 2009. UC, in partnership with the Washington Office Conservation Education staff and Betty Brinn Children's Museum, developed a unique interactive exhibit featuring Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl. The exhibit introduces young children to the natural world around them and the joys of outdoor recreation. Among the exhibit's features are a ranger station, fire look-out tower, campsite, and boat equipped with fishing gear. The exhibit debuted at Milwaukee's Betty Brinn Children's Museum in April 2009. Forest Service conservation messages will be shared nation-wide as this 1,500 square-foot exhibit embarks on a four year tour of children's museums across the country.



Secure Rural Schools

Annually, the Forest Service returns 25 percent of revenues to States for distribution among counties within national forest boundaries. In 2008, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS) authorized a "full payment" option to counties. In 2009, over \$27 million was returned to counties in the Eastern Region. Additionally, the SRS resulted in the formation of Resource Advisory Committees (RAC's) to identify SRS-funded projects for completion. Twelve RAC's have been chartered within the East. The Region anticipates the RAC's will provide opportunities for important communication between the Forest Service and members of the local public interested in supporting projects on national forests. One important outcome will be continued support for the Firewise Communities' programs and Community Wildfire Protections Plans.

Essential Mix—Partners & the Eastern Region



Partners provide an invaluable connection with groups and organizations that share our commitment to responsible land management. Many of the projects that enhance our national forests and tallgrass prairie are made possible through the generous assistance of our many partners and volunteers. Notable achievements in 2009 include:

- Fish Tales introduced 198 kids in the summer to fishing and environmental education. Ten cooperating agencies and organizations, including the Shawnee National Forest (Ill.), worked together to make this partnership a success;
- An outcome of an important partnership with the non-profit Fuller Park Community Development Corporation was three specialized training sessions held on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (Ill.) hosted by Fuller Park. Another was Prairie staff and volunteers participating in several environmental education events at Eden Place in Fuller Park;
- Urban Connections and the Regional Office's Renewable Resources staff partnered with Minnesota's Superior and Chippewa National Forests, Northern Research Station, and Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry to distribute 5,000 white spruce seedlings and share important information on preventing the spread of invasive species at the State Fish Art Expo at Mall of America.
- The Chippewa National Forest partnered with the North Country Trail Association and its local chapters to develop and implement an "adopt a trail" program to complete annual trail maintenance. The work of volunteers in this program saves the forest between \$6,000 to \$9,000 annually.



Walk the Talk for Sustainability



Restoring the Middle Mississippi River and its Floodplain

The Shawnee National Forest (Ill.) collaborates with 20 other federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations on the Middle Mississippi River project working to restore and enhance the natural resources of the 200-mile Middle Mississippi River corridor. Since the inception of this program in 2002, 2,556 acres of bottomland, 21 acres of native grasslands, and 7.3 miles of side-channels have been restored; and 932 acres of private land have been conserved. This year the Eastern Region signed a Memorandum of Understanding to extend partner efforts to 2013.



West Virginia Climate Change Sessions

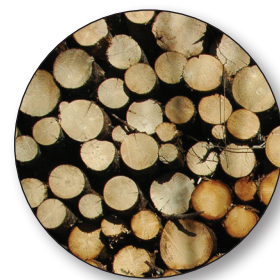
In 2009, the Monongahela National Forest (W.Va.) joined with partners to host a two-day workshop - an interactive forum designed to help make progress on finding solutions to the challenges of climate change. Presentations helped land managers understand the interactions between forests, carbon cycles & sequestration, and climate change. Participants learned about new analysis tools developed by partners, such as The Nature Conservancy and West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. The Climate Change Wizard and Climate Change Vulnerability Index help resource specialists analyze impacts and predict the future of species affected by climate change.

We are practicing sustainable operations with partners, volunteers, states, and tribes to manage today's forests with tomorrow's in mind. Specific 2009 accomplishments include:

- Purchasing more hybrid and E-85 compatible vehicles;
- Reducing our environmental footprint at the Deer River District Office on the Chippewa National Forest (Minn.). The District's Extreme Makeover video serves as a model for National Forest System lands nation-wide and received the White House's Closing the Circle Award.
- Installing 252 new solar panels on the roof of the Wayne National Forest (Ohio) Headquarters, through ARRA funding—bringing the expanded system to a total of 302 solar panels, which is expected to generate about 30% of the building's electricity; and
- Completing LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified Headquarters' Office on the White Mountain National Forest (N.H.). Among the sustainable features are elevator hydraulics that run on canola or vegetable oil; a wood pellet boiler supplying heat to main building and warehouse; interior lighting automatically dims when there is sufficient natural light available; and carpeting and steel used in construction were made from recycled content.

Managing a Renewable Resource

A tough economy and market conditions resulted in a decrease in the timber harvest in 2009. The Forest Service responded by issuing emergency rate redeterminations and market related contract term adjustments – these efforts help ease the impacts of a down market on companies and communities. Despite poor market conditions, the Eastern Region sold a total of 607,090 cubic feet of timber at a value of \$25,660,000. Land management activities resulted in many benefits including wood to help meet the country's needs.



Biomass

Forest stand improvement, hazardous fuel reduction, forest health treatments and other non-commercial activities are often necessary for the long-term health and sustainability of forest ecosystems. Using woody biomass—non-merchantable wood, such as tree limbs, needles, and leaves—decreases the cost of future forest treatments. In partnership with other federal, state, and local government agencies, the Hiawatha National Forest is part of the BURN-UP project in the Upper Peninsula (UP) of Michigan. This project promotes energy production from woody biomass, thus improving opportunities to develop an active, commercially viable woody biomass industry in the UP. Meanwhile, in Wisconsin, a local company—Olson Brothers Enterprises, LLC—received a 2009 USDA Forest Service Woody Biomass Utilization Grant to expand their biomass chipping capabilities. Through this grant, Olson Brothers will expand their capacity to treat areas on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, as well as position themselves to provide needed forest stand improvement activities after catastrophic events such as a wind or ice storm.



Revolutionize Effectiveness and Efficiency



Expanding Stewardship through Regional Agreements

Stewardship contracting and agreements leverage resources to restore watershed conditions, maintain water quality, improve soil productivity & wildlife habitat, promote healthy forest conditions, and control non-native invasive species. The Region's stewardship program includes 69 projects on a total of 65,680 acres. These projects help us meet land management goals while also meeting local and rural community needs, such as work for local residents, fuel—in the form of woody biomass—to heat public buildings, and improved recreational opportunities.

Improved Waterways, Roads, & Trails, Oh My!

In 2009, significant collaboration resulted in improved roads, trails, and waterways used by aquatic species. Places where roads and trails cross wetlands or waterways often prevent aquatic species—such as turtles, mussels, or salamanders—from moving up or downstream. We made progress by removing physical barriers that limit the movement of these aquatic animals. Specific accomplishments include:

- Improving 50 acres of watersheds by decommissioning 30 miles of roads and trails;
- Repairing 20 trail crossings;
- Restoring 165 acres of wetlands; and
- Removing or modifying 50 road-stream crossings to allow for aquatic species passage, and making 90 miles of nursery and spawning habitat accessible for cold, cool, and warm water game and non-game fish species.

Incorporating new technologies and collaborating across boundaries are just a few ways that we are increasing our effectiveness and efficiency. In 2009, we demonstrated this by:

- Using air quality monitoring equipment to monitor prescribed burning projects. Equipment can be monitored remotely via satellite, while information is shared across program areas;
- Partnering with public and private agencies, as well as individuals to protect and restore habitat in Allegheny National Forest (Pa.) watersheds, as part of the Watershed Improvement Needs Coalition; and
- Exceeding targets for contracting work with small businesses, including service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

Engine Academy

The Eastern Region hosted its first Fire Engine Academy this spring on the Shawnee National Forest in Illinois. Firefighters from across the Region learned new strategies for improving efficiencies and safety measures. They were joined by representatives from the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Indiana Department of Natural Resources in the week-long training.



Landscape Scale Approach to Climate Change

In 2009 the Eastern Region, Forest Service Research, and State & Private Forestry began to bridge the gap between climate change research and management activities on national forests. In the Lake States & Northeast, we identified several actions to address management challenges brought on by the uncertainty of climate change. For example, Wisconsin's Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest has begun to identify a process for climate change adaptation and mitigation for national forests that can be used both regionally and nationally. The key interrelated components of the project—science, partnerships & collaboration, and education & outreach—will be integrated into a Climate Change Response Framework. Lessons learned from this endeavor will be transferred to other units to increase the Region's ability to respond to observed landscape changes caused by climate fluctuations. For example, changes in geographic distribution of plant and animal species.

Thank You Volunteers!

Volunteers in the Eastern Region contributed a total of 430,330 hours to regional projects—that's 244 person years! The work accomplished by these dedicated people provided an added value to the Region of \$8,676,755. They assisted in restoring watersheds, providing quality recreation experiences, improving wildlife and fisheries habitats, and sustaining healthy ecosystems and communities. Across the Region, volunteers have stepped up and made a difference!



Be an Employer of Choice



Forests Become an Employer of Choice

The Mark Twain (Mo.), Shawnee (Ill.), Hoosier (Ind.), Wayne (Ohio), and Monongahela (W.Va.) National Forests all joined together to produce a "Working Together" newsletter to share information about outreach, volunteer opportunities, project highlights, job openings, and upcoming events. A more focused approach for the southern part of our Region provided more effective communication with the public and yielded positive results.

The Eastern Region promotes training and professional development programs, recruitment, and outreach efforts. We are an employer of choice as demonstrated by:

- Our senior and middle leader programs allow employees to practice skills needed to become leaders, as well as attract, optimize, and retain top talent. In 2009, ten Eastern Region employees participated in these programs;
- Welcoming more than 40 students into the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) during a high energy and professional orientation session;
- Hiring 110 youth as part of Youth Conservation Corps program. This program provides a hands-on educational experience to youth, encouraging the development of future natural resource managers and leaders; and
- The Forest Service co-sponsored the 2009 Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences 24th Annual Career Fair & Training Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Eastern Region, along with several other Regions, was well represented by Regional Office and Hoosier National Forest employees.

45 Years of Changing Lives!

Job Corps was created in 1964 by the Economic Opportunity Act. Today 123 Job Corps Centers across the nation train nearly 60,000 students each year. We work closely with 14 Job Corps Centers in the Eastern and Southern Regions to offer training and employment opportunities in natural resource fields. In 2009, three Job Corps students were added to the Region's workforce as SCEP students, and two Job Corps students were hired permanently. It's a "win-win" situation for all involved!



Page 3 Overview; **Caption:** Peregrine Falcon, photographer: Tom Kogut. *Protecting a "Great" Resource*; **Caption:** Map of National Forest lands within the Great Lakes Basin. *Across International Lines to the Heart of the Continent*; **Caption:** Centennial canoe on the water.

Page 4 *Land Acquisitions Reap Multiple Benefits*; **Caption:** The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness on the Superior NF. *American Beech Makes a Comeback*; **Caption:** American Beech grafting technique. *Monongahela Goes Wild!*; **Caption:** Roaring Plains West Wilderness Area on the Monongahela NF.

Page 5 Overview; **Caption:** More Kids in the Woods on the Hiawatha NF. *Secure Rural*

Schools; **Caption:** School children from the Lac du Flambeau tribe at the Ottawa's Camp Nesbit. *Urban Connections*; **Caption:** WO Conservation Education Director Safiya Samman shares fishing expertise with a visitor at the Grand Opening of the exhibit. *Essential Mix—Partners & the Eastern Region*; **Caption (top left):** Child learns about fishing at Fish Tales program. **Caption (bottom right):** Forest Service employees staff a booth at the State Fish Art Expo, sharing invasive species messages with visitors.

Page 6 Overview; **Caption:** New LEED Certified White Mountain NF Administrative complex. *Restoring the Middle Mississippi River and its Floodplain*; **Caption:** This 195-mile

stretch of the Mississippi River is unfettered by locks or dams between southern Illinois and southern Missouri. *Biomass*; **Caption:** Biomass dozer at work on the Hiawatha NF.

Page 7 Overview; **Caption:** Air quality monitoring equipment. *Engine Academy*; **Caption (top):** Engine Academy training in action. **Caption (bottom):** Engine Academy Instructors. *Volunteers*; **Caption:** National Public Lands Day volunteers on the Chequamegon Nicolet NF.

Page 8 Overview; **Caption:** 2009 Conservation Education Intern teaches school children about the environment. *Job Corps Celebrates 45th Anniversary*; **Caption:** Job Corps students attend celebratory event in Washington, D.C.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD), USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

